

# Inspection of Palfrey Infant School

Bescot Street, Walsall, West Midlands WS1 4HY

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Inspection dates: 11 and 12 October 2022

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Good**

Early years provision

**Good**

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

This school was last inspected 13 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Care and kindness lie at the heart of Palfrey Infant School. 'Happy children aiming high' is the school's vision. Pupils are happy to come to school because they believe that staff care for them. Parents, carers and staff want the very best for every pupil.

Over the last few years, the school has been through some very difficult times, which have slowed developments in the quality of education. Leaders know there is work to be done to ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), make up for lost learning.

The positive way in which staff interact with pupils really supports pupils' positive behaviour. Pupils behave well because they know it is the right thing to do. Staff help them to understand the impact of unkind words or actions. Consequently, pupils are as caring as the staff around them.

This is a school that takes its community responsibility seriously. Workshops provide opportunities for parents and children to learn together. Celebration assemblies, visiting artists and links with the county cricket club help to develop healthy bodies and minds.

Pupils know what bullying is, and they say it hardly ever happens. Staff act swiftly to investigate any potential cases, and act when needed.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

Since the last inspection, the school has faced some real challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic limited early learning opportunities for many pupils. During the pandemic, and since the return from lockdown, unexpected and very sad events rocked this community. All are committed to catching up, and their actions show the tenacity to do this quickly. Throughout this time, the headteacher was a tower of strength who rightly prioritised pupils' and staff's emotional well-being.

Most children start at Palfrey Infant School speaking English as an additional language. Some begin not being able to understand or speak English at all. Staff work hard to develop pupils' understanding and use of spoken English. Even during playtimes, and mealtimes, all staff look for opportunities to talk to pupils. However, some staff use too many words, which can confuse some pupils with additional language needs.

Reading is prioritised from the start. As soon as children can use spoken English to communicate, they start to learn phonics. Reading and phonics sessions happen daily across all classes. When pupils fall behind, they access additional daily reading sessions to help them catch up. Teachers read to whole classes at every opportunity, and at least twice a day.

In subjects such as religious education and history, pupils are excited to learn about the world around them. In some cases, staff have carefully linked the pupils' prior experiences to new learning, for example using pupils' own experiences of the Islamic festival of Eid al-Fitr to develop an understanding of Diwali or harvest festival. Consequently, some pupils are confident to talk about the personal importance of Eid al-Adha and how this helps them to understand the importance of other festivals for other faiths. However, the way in which the curriculum is taught means that some pupils cannot remember what they have learned in previous lessons. This makes learning new things harder.

Long-term plans for what pupils should learn in subjects such as mathematics and art are ambitious. Subject leaders attend regular training with colleagues from other schools or attend online courses. They then use this knowledge to develop ambitious sequences of lessons. However, while some teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects, they do not all have the expertise they need across all subjects. This means that staff do not consistently ensure pupils fully understand what they are taught.

For some pupils with SEND, expectations are high. This is most noticeable in the early years, when staff have high expectations for all children. However, in other year groups this aspiration is not as strong. Too many pupils with SEND do not access the ambitious curriculum that their classmates might. Too many are not taught enough by their class teacher alongside their peers. This leads to gaps in their knowledge and limits opportunities to learn from other pupils. While pupils with SEND are always with caring staff, their lessons are not as challenging as they could be. Opportunities to move them on quickly in their learning are not always taken.

This school prepares pupils well for the world around them. Leaders prioritise working with families to ensure that all understand what children need to be safe and confident members of society. For example, staying safe online is not just taught to pupils but also to their families. The school's own forest school and raised vegetable beds provide opportunities to understand nature and food. Trips to the local park, other schools and even the local allotments are prioritised to help pupils develop a keen awareness of their local community. A recent project encouraged pupils to reflect on their faith and spirituality through art.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders rightly have worked hard to create a culture where children feel safe and are safe. They do not wait for pupils or families to need help. They spend time getting to know them so they can provide the proper support to prevent situations where pupils might be at risk. The parents inspectors spoke to trust staff and felt confident to ask them for help when needed.

Regular training aims to ensure that all staff have the necessary skills to act when they feel pupils are at risk. When concerns are raised, those responsible for

safeguarding act quickly to investigate. As a result, pupils and families get the support they need.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- A high number of pupils on the SEND register do not routinely access the ambitious whole-school curriculum. Too many are taught away from the rest of their class and are missing out, at times, on the ambition others are expected to achieve. Some are taught by staff who might not have strong curriculum knowledge or pedagogical skill. Leaders need to ensure that all pupils have access to the whole curriculum and the chance to learn regularly alongside their peers and from their class teacher.
- Some staff do not yet have the comprehensive subject knowledge to effectively implement the curriculum for all pupils. This means that some pupils are not yet building a deep enough understanding of what they are learning. Leaders need to ensure that all staff have access to subject-specific training to ensure that all pupils gain a deep understanding of the subjects they are learning.
- When implementing the curriculum, teachers do not routinely ensure that all pupils have secured their new-found knowledge into their long-term memory. Lessons do not always provide opportunities to recap prior learning or reinforce current learning. Sometimes, too much spoken language complicates learning and makes remembering harder. Leaders need to ensure that all staff carefully adapt their curriculum implementation to ensure that pupils learn and remember more over time.

## **How can I feed back my views?**

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

## **Further information**

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	104161
<b>Local authority</b>	Walsall
<b>Inspection number</b>	10242287
<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	357
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Mariam Parekh
<b>Headteacher</b>	Alison Walsh
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.palfreyinfant.co.uk">www.palfreyinfant.co.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	3 and 4 March 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, a new chair of governors took up post in September 2022. They had previously served as a governor since 2019.
- A new special educational needs and disabilities coordinator was appointed, and joined the leadership team in July 2022.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics, history and religious education. In these subjects, they visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and talked with pupils and staff about how these subjects were taught. Inspectors also looked at other subjects in less detail to check how they were planned and taught.

- Inspectors asked pupils, staff, leaders and governors about safeguarding arrangements. They scrutinised the employment checks on school staff and looked at other school records. They also found out about health and safety procedures and routines.
- Inspectors observed informal times to evaluate safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors also spoke to a representative from the local authority. Inspectors spoke to the school improvement partners.
- During the inspection, the inspectors had formal meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject teachers, governors, teachers and pupils. They also talked informally to parents, carers, pupils and staff to gather general information about school life.

### **Inspection team**

Chris Pollitt, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Anna Vrahimi	His Majesty's Inspector
Kate Wilcock	Ofsted Inspector

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